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S E C R E T ABUJA 002547

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/12

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: INTRIGUE AT ASO ROCK?

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter. Reason 1.5 (B and D)

11. (S) In a stunning 8/26 revelation, a member of President Obasanjo's inner circle told the Ambassador, in strictest confidence, that Vice President Atiku Abubakar is the moving force behind current efforts to impeach President Obasanjo. The source said that Atiku hatched the plot during his recent two week absence from Nigeria, ostensibly for a vacation in the United States, and he is now paying handsome sums to agents in the National Assembly to implement it. Atiku also has promised Senate President Anyim Pius Anyim that he would be Atiku's choice for Vice Presidential running mate, if the impeachment plan succeeds. Atiku, the source said, plans to break with Obasanjo in September, and announce his independent candidacy to seek the PDP presidential nomination. (Comment: The local media is now reporting that Atiku is no longer dismissing suggestions that he might run, but instead is saying that "Allah will decide." End comment.)

12. (S) Calling Atiku an ingrate and "terrible man," the source said that Obasanjo was initially devastated but has now regrouped and plans to counter Atiku's move against him. The plan involves undermining Atiku's stature and credibility in the PDP, although how Obasanjo would do this was not made clear.

13. (S) Asked if Ibrahim Babangida had a hand in these machinations, the source said that Babangida was not associated with Atiku's plot, but was planning to back National Security Advisor Aliyu Mohammed as his surrogate in the bid for the Presidency. IBB himself would not run.

14. (S) Comment: Often it is difficult to discern fact from fiction in Nigerian politics. The source of this report, however, is impeccable and is well positioned to know of any and all intrigues at Aso Rock. At the same time, this interlocutor is usually in step with Obasanjo's thinking, and if he believes in this turn of events, Obasanjo likely believes it as well.

15. (S) If this information is true, Obasanjo's bid for renomination and reelection has suffered a most serious blow. He will find it extremely difficult to win an election without Atiku's political machine. If word gets out that Atiku engineered this, many people will commend him for trying to derail Obasanjo, but an equal number, if not more, will see him as a Brutus who should neither be trusted nor rewarded politically. By undermining Obasanjo, Atiku also taints himself. Babangida, moreover, cannot allow Atiku to run and win. Major defections at the Aso Rock would be the death knell for Obasanjo's regime. The walls around Obasanjo may be starting to crumble.

JETER